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ABSTRACT

The Title I Early Childhood Component of Boston's Elementary Enrichment Program (1977-78) was intended to provide children (including the hearing impaired) with enriched educational experiences that would contribute to socialization skills and general readiness for school and later life experiences. The Component was also intended to provide individualized attention to children who needed special assistance in increasing their emotional, physical, social, and intellectual growth. Title I teacher aides, using Title I materials, worked under the direction of regular teachers to individualize instruction and provide small group activities for program pupils. The ability of teachers and aides to coordinate their efforts, the integration of program pupils with mainstream students, and the aides' ability to adapt performance objectives to serve as individualized guidelines all contributed to the achievement of program goals. A workshop for aides was a valuable resource in helping them develop instructional materials and techniques to increase classroom effectiveness. Weakness were that (1) testing took too much time away from instruction; (2) a lack of clarity in certain performance objectives led to improvised measurement methods; and (3) occasional confusion over role definitions hindered the most effective use of aides. Problems included transportation difficulties, shortage and/or delayed arrival of materials, nondurable materials, a few inadequate facilities, and large class size. (CMG)

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Project No.: 78-035-134

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

EARLY CHILDHOOD COMPONENT

of the 1977-1978

BOSTON ELEMENTARY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

(An E.S.E.A. Title I Project of the Boston Public School System)

Submitted to:
THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
of
THE CITY OF BOSTON

Submitted by:
EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH
In Cooperation With:
THE TITLE I
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION
and
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MARGARET M. CALLAHAN
Chapter I Program
26 Court St., 3rd fl.
Boston, MA 02108

TITLE:	Final Evaluation Report for the Early Childhood Component of the Elementary Enrichment Program, 1977-1978
AGENCY:	Educational Planning and Research 40 Court Street, Boston, Ma. 02108
PRINCIPAL ADMINISTRATOR:	William R. Grieve, Ed.D., Director School Division
PRINCIPAL EVALUATORS:	William R. Grieve, Ed.D., Director Harriet Bush, M.A., Associate Director
TRANSMITTED BY:	William R. Grieve

Foreword

An appraisal of the 1977-78 Early Childhood Education Component funded under Title I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act is presented in this final evaluation report.

Following a general summary, the program has been assessed in terms of implementation, administration, scope, and achievement of the program goals. Recommendations have been suggested for consideration in further implementation of this component and in future planning.

Program staff, the component coordinator, and school administrators contributed valuable support and assistance to the assessment process.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE I EARLY CHILDHOOD

INTRODUCTION

The Title I Early Childhood component was intended to provide children with enriched educational experiences that would contribute to socialization skills and general readiness for elementary school and later life experiences. The component was also intended to provide individualized attention to children who needed special assistance in increasing their emotional, physical, social, and intellectual growth. The evaluation of this component consisted of ongoing observations of classroom activities, interviews with teachers and aides, and analysis of program data.

The objective was primarily implemented through the use of Title I materials by Title I aides who worked under the direction of regular teachers to individualize instruction and provide small group activities for program pupils. Title I performance objectives and standardized tests were used to measure pupil progress.

The program heavily emphasized activities that would promote development of pupils' socialization skills. To implement this objective, program pupils were usually integrated with others and where it was necessary to achieve the objectives of the Title I program, shared available instructional facilities. Aides received training at a spring workshop at which they exchanged ideas and received instruction in the most efficient use of Title I materials.

STRENGTHS

The ability of teachers and Title I aides to coordinate their efforts appeared to enable program activities to run smoothly, and the integration of program pupils with others seemed to facilitate communication and socialization skills.

Aides' ability to adapt performance objectives to serve as individualized guidelines also appeared to contribute to the achievement of program goals. According to observations, a workshop for aides was a valuable re-

source in helping them to develop instructional materials and techniques to increase classroom effectiveness.

WEAKNESSES

The amount of time absorbed by testing was considered by teachers and aides to take too much time away from instructional activities. A lack of clarity in the performance objectives on specific tasks resulted in teachers working with Title I aides in improvising methods of measurement, making it sometimes difficult to obtain objective and accurate assessments of student progress.

Occasional confusion over role definitions and responsibilities of aides appeared to interfere in some instances with the most effective use of aides to achieve program objectives.

PROBLEMS

Transportation difficulties were found to be disruptive of program activities in some classrooms, while in others, a shortage of materials, the nonarrival of ordered supplies, and the late arrival of tests were cited as problems interfering with the implementation of Title I objectives. Some materials were found to be non-durable, requiring replacement at the end of the year. Facilities in some schools appeared to be of inadequate size or in need of more careful maintenance.

Some teachers noted that the large size of their classes interfered with achieving program goals, and, in one case, a teacher's petition to reduce class size was denied at the Board of Education level.

Aides expressed concern regarding their small salary and occasional late arrival of paychecks. Aides who were assigned to two teachers during the day noted difficulties adapting to different teachers and environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve socialization skills of Title I pupils by exploring means of providing them with individualized instruction and attention without segregation from other pupils.

2. Consider restating and clarifying performance objectives when necessary to permit greater objectivity in their use as measures of achievement for assessment purposes.

3. Experiment with methods of systematizing or consolidating tests to reduce the number required and the amount of classroom time absorbed.

4. Encourage teachers and aides to develop methods of using performance objectives as guidelines for individualizing instruction and supplementing other activities.

5. Continue to reinforce adjustment and learning of Title I children through cooperative activities with those not in the program. The evaluators believe that sharing of space facilities and materials by all children in the group tends to reinforce learning, social adjustment, and ethnic understanding.

6. Conduct additional workshops for aides so they can exchange information and share new methods and activities. Encourage teachers to participate in helping aides develop instructional skills.

7. Explore new ways to use Title I and supplemental materials for instructional purposes and for reinforcement activities that increase opportunities for socialization and communication.

8. Exert efforts to organize all activities so that each reinforces a particular skill or skills.

9. Increase teachers' awareness of abilities of aides and encourage the most effective employment of these resources in the classroom.

10. Delineate roles of teachers and aides to encourage an understanding of responsibilities to be undertaken by each and to clarify the mutual goal of achieving the objectives of the program.

11. Encourage teachers and aides to participate together in scheduled workshops designed to promote coordination of activities and cooperation in designing program materials.

FINAL REPORT

TITLE I REPORT

EARLY CHILDHOOD COMPONENT

Project No. 78-035-134

OBJECTIVE 1

To provide "children with the time and the opportunity to acquire rich experiences, broad foundations, socially acceptable behaviors, and the specific skills needed for total growth and development."

FINDINGS

Interview findings indicated that this program operated smoothly despite a moderately late start caused by transportation difficulties. While most teachers and aides stated that attendance of program pupils was generally stable, others noted an erratic attendance pattern. Although attendance officers were responsible for parental contact and follow up with long-term absentees, interviews revealed that several aides and teachers attempted to contact parents in order to allay attendance problems.

Evaluation findings showed that pupils were often selected according to initial impressions. Later modifications of these impressions, along with pupil mobility, resulted in additions and discharges of participants in order to provide services to as many pupils as possible.

Teachers and aides usually collaborated on coordinating schedules of activities in order to minimize classroom disruptions. Aides were observed offering supplemental assistance during group activities and lessons and during individualized instruction, as well as assisting teachers with small group supervision and routine duties. When conflicts occurred between teachers and aides, they were in most cases amicably resolved with the assistance of the coordinator.

Observations indicated that although program pupils received preferential treatment from aides so that they could benefit from provided services, requests to participate from non-Title I pupils were not refused. Most aides did not segregate program pupils from others. However, some aides noted that pupils were occasionally separated in order to work on specific performance objectives.

For all program pupils, the aides maintained individual folders containing letters and forms completed by parents, test results, work samples,

and performance objective progress reports. However, because most children wanted to take their work home, aides retained only assignments indicative of specific types of work accomplished.

Most teachers and aides took joint responsibility for organizing the decoration of classrooms with pupil work and appropriate displays. Space was provided in each classroom for teachers' and aides' materials, group play areas, work areas, pupils' supplies, and for class records of program participants and other pupils. In general, classrooms in the modern facilities were equipped with a greater variety of materials such as aquariums and egg incubators. Materials supplied by Title I, however, appeared to be evenly distributed except for rather limited audio-visual equipment.

DISCUSSION

Program pupils appeared to receive instruction and individualized attention without often being segregated from their peers, a situation which, in the evaluators' opinion, facilitated the development of socialization patterns by identified pupils.

Although classrooms were not equally equipped, the evaluators believe that teachers and aides compensated sufficiently for discrepancies by creating attractive and stimulating displays, by providing supplemental materials, and by preparing activities. In most cases, space was organized for maximum usage, even in rooms with limited areas.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Improve socialization skills of Title I pupils by exploring means of providing them with individualized instruction and attention without segregation from other pupils.

OBJECTIVE 2

To "establish and develop a general background of learning and to add to the readiness that is the initial step in the elementary school."

FINDINGS

Interviews showed that progress of program pupils was determined using Title I performance objectives and a pre- post-administration of the Pre-School Inventory for KI and the Boehm Test of Basic Concepts for KII pupils. In addition, Assessing Children for Early Prescriptive Teaching (ACEPT) was administered on an experimental basis for Title I children at two schools. Other measures included the Metropolitan Readiness Test, administered city-wide to all kindergarten pupils, and the Santa Clara Inventory for pupil selection, used by the Jackson-Mann Extended Day program for hearing and hearing impaired. Results and individualized prescriptions were received by teachers and aides in the spring so they could develop educational plans and activities emphasizing areas of weakness. Many teachers and aides expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with testing, often citing the length and number of requested tests as debilitating to overall effective implementation.

Standardized Test Results

Results from standardized tests indicate non-significant gains for KI and non-significant losses for KII. The posttest mean for KI was the 71st percentile and was the 49th percentile for KII. It should be noted, however, that the latter group of percentile ranks was normed on entering first grade norms, thus accounting for the discrepancy between KI and KII's mean ranks. Analyses of performance objective data show that KI students obtained an overall 68% mastery while KII students had a total mastery of 72%.

The general reaction to the performance objectives appeared to be positive, with some reservations regarding the validity of their use. Several teachers and aides expressed concern about the rigidity and scope of designated tasks as effective indicators of educational and emotional growth on the kindergarten level. Observations and interviews revealed that most aides were able to adapt performance objectives as a means of individualizing attention and instruction methods, and as a means of augmenting teacher-planned activities. Teachers and aides noted a lack of clarity in the performance objectives concerning specific tasks to be accomplished. A variety of techniques of their own were developed to evaluate pupils' achievements.

Questionnaires

Questionnaire responses from teachers, aides, and administrators indicate that Title I children were perceived to be slightly behind in some skills but that the program was successful and needed. Suggestions for improving the program included the addition of teacher workshops and increased parental involvement.

DISCUSSION

The evaluators concur in their observation that the amount of time absorbed by testing imposed an unnecessary burden on program teachers and aides, particularly when individualized or small group testing was required. A systematized approach that would consolidate tests might prove beneficial in reducing tedium.

In general, Title I performance objectives appeared to coincide with the Boston curriculum, thus positively reinforcing, in the evaluators' opinion, the program policy of non-segregation of Title I pupils from others. The measures employed by aides to develop more effective ways of using the objectives as performance guidelines seemed to contribute to the achievement of program goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Consider restating and clarifying performance objectives when necessary to permit greater objectivity in their use as measures of achievement for assessment purposes.

2. Experiment with methods of systematizing or consolidating tests to reduce the number required and the amount of classroom time absorbed.

3. Encourage teachers and aides to develop methods of using performance objectives as guidelines for individualizing instruction and supplementing other activities.

OBJECTIVE 3

To "give children the necessary foundation which will enable them to succeed in future school experiences and in life."

FINDINGS

Findings indicated that Title I materials were evenly distributed

among program classrooms. Aides stated that the most attractive feature of the materials was their distinct difference from other available materials. They were able to use such materials as individualized instructional games to remediate specific skill deficiencies of program pupils. Program administrators stimulated interest in the use of various materials, often encouraging new and innovative techniques and aide-designed activities to supplement Title I materials. Interviews revealed that non-Title I pupils often shared the materials with Title I pupils, creating a unified classroom atmosphere.

Most aides expressed gratitude for the spring workshop in particular, and indicated that more workshops would improve their performance in the classroom. The workshops provided aides with an opportunity to exchange ideas and self-designed materials. Program materials were also distributed and demonstrated so that aides could learn the most beneficial means of presentation. The general consensus among aides was that the new materials obtained during the spring workshop were important for continued program success, since children had become bored with and ceased to use the other materials. Introducing the new materials renewed enthusiasm and increased participation.

Few field trips were conducted on the kindergarten level because of lack of funds. Some classes, however, visited out-of-building sites with the assistance of non-Title I funds, with parents volunteering to act as chaperones when necessary.

Teachers and aides indicated that in addition to the materials supplied to the Jackson-Mann Extended Day program by Title I, many non-Title I materials were used. Cameras (supplied independently by Polaroid) and cooking utensils (supplied by Title I) were used extensively for reinforcement activities. Teachers and aides noted the need for such activities on an ongoing basis rather than only on special occasions.

The program's emphasis on the development of socialization skills was cited by staff members as integral in helping hearing, hearing impaired, and deaf children communicate and interact with one another. Total communication, using sign and speech as often as possible in the open classroom environment, appeared to contribute to the cohesive classroom atmosphere stressed by teachers and aides. Although the class was divided for small group activities, findings indicated that organization among teachers and aides enabled the class to interrelate and work together as a single unit.

DISCUSSION

The evaluators believe that the aides sought not only information but also peer support from the workshops. In the evaluators' opinion, more workshops are needed so that aides can receive additional guidance from each other as well as from program administrators. The inclusion of teachers at some of the workshops could provide a resource to help aides develop activities and materials.

It appeared to the evaluators that introducing instructional games which were not available through other channels highly influenced this program's operation.

The Jackson-Mann Extended Day program appeared to be coherent and highly organized without being oppressively structured. Every activity seemed to the evaluators to emphasize a particular skill or skills. The evaluators believe that this reinforcement contributed to the program's success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to reinforce adjustment and learning of Title I children through cooperative activities with those not in the program. The evaluators believe that sharing of space facilities and materials by all children in the group tends to reinforce learning, social adjustment, and ethnic understanding.

2. Conduct additional workshops for aides so they can exchange information and share new methods and activities. Encourage teachers to participate in helping aides develop instructional skills.

3. Explore new ways to use Title I and supplemental materials for instructional purposes and for reinforcement activities that increase opportunities for socialization and communication.

4. Exert efforts to organize all activities so that each reinforces a particular skill or skills.

OBJECTIVE 4

To provide special assistance to children "who require additional individual help to increase their emotional, physical, social, and intellectual growth."

FINDINGS

Aides and teachers coordinated instructional activities by reviewing

teachers' plans regularly. In some cases, teachers encouraged aides to initiate activities in addition to supplementing teacher-designed lessons. Most staff members expressed concern regarding roles and responsibilities in the classroom and requested clarification and delineation. Findings indicated that aides provided individualized attention to pupils, reinforced aspects of group activity, and assisted the teacher with routine clerical and maintenance tasks. Since teachers and aides were not sure who should assume responsibility for testing, record keeping, and reviewing performance objectives, these duties were often divided between teachers and aides depending on what appeared to be most advantageous. According to interviews, many aides were frustrated in their attempts to adhere strictly to Title I guidelines because teachers lacked a definition of the aides' roles. When aides were given increased responsibility in the Jackson-Mann Extended Day program, some aides expressed concern over the assignment of teacher duties to aides by school personnel.

Several teachers allotted a time period during the day for aides to work individually or in small groups with Title I pupils. Early in the program, aides emphasized individualized instruction on skills, however many would group pupils when possible in order to increase opportunities for socialization.

In some schools, parental contact was maintained daily during arrival and dismissal times. One teacher not only encouraged involvement of parents but allowed them to participate in the classroom when possible. However, some teachers and aides stated that they encountered difficulty in contacting parents concerning pupil progress. Several meetings were held during the school day for parents of Title I pupils, but none were specifically designed for parents of Early Childhood pupils. Some principals indicated that the addition of such meetings might improve parental participation on the kindergarten level, although according to interviews, some parents were reluctant to attend meetings in certain neighborhoods in the evenings.

When possible, bilingual aides were matched with classes that had large bilingual populations. Several aides, however, reported a desire for more information on techniques for assisting pupils with native languages other than English.

DISCUSSION

The evaluators believe that some teachers were unaware of the most effective ways to utilize aides for reinforcing classroom activities. The lack of clarity regarding their roles and responsibilities also appeared to cause confusion for teachers and aides. Although many teacher and aides have independently worked out methods of cooperation, the evaluators believe that inviting teachers to participate in workshops for aides (particularly program orientation workshops) would help teachers and aides develop a team approach in coordinating activities and developing materials for classroom use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase teachers' awareness of abilities of aides and encourage the most effective employment of these resources in the classroom.

2. Delineate roles of teachers and aides to encourage an understanding of responsibilities to be undertaken by each and to clarify the mutual goal of achieving the objectives of the program.

3. Encourage teachers and aides to participate together in scheduled workshops designed to promote coordination of activities and cooperation in designing program materials.

OBJECTIVE 5

To supply Title I-funded instructional activities and materials to a selected group of hearing impaired and hearing pupils identified as having special needs in order to meet previously stated Title I objectives for social and emotional growth and improved readiness in academic and skill areas.

FINDINGS

Evaluation findings indicated that the Jackson-Mann Extended Day program for the hearing and hearing impaired was highly successful in fulfilling its objective. Observations revealed that teachers and aides worked together extremely well in coordinating individualized attention and small group activities. A total communication approach was used, with all teachers and many aides skillfully using sign and speech as a visual refer-

ent beneficial to deaf and hearing impaired as well as bilingual pupils. Interviews revealed that teachers and aides followed up long absences and occasionally made home visits. The classroom environment was observed to be well organized and materials used effectively.

Teachers and aides expressed concern regarding the source of supply for materials. Although materials were all supposed to be supplied by Title I, many which had been ordered were never received. Teachers indicated there was a great need for materials to use in this program.

The special Jackson-Mann Extended Day project yielded an overall mastery of 75% of the objectives for ages 3 - 4, 89% for Grade KI and 80% for KII.

DISCUSSION

It appeared that the total communication approach was effective in developing a warm and supportive learning environment for participating pupils with a variety of needs. The evaluators believe that this program was highly successful in terms of services provided, use of materials, close cooperation among teachers and aides, and provision of an atmosphere conducive to pupils' achievement of Title I academic and non-academic objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Exert efforts to obtain materials needed for program activities.
2. Encourage teachers to develop and use supplementary and innovative materials during the time that anticipated program materials are unavailable.

EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH

EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS

Staff Members of the School Division

William R. Grieve, Ed.D.	Director
Harriet Bush, M.A.	Associate Director
Administrative Associate:	Michael D. Gelardi, B.A.
Senior Evaluators:	William R. Grieve, Ed.D. Harriet Bush, M.A. Eleanor Lander, Ed.M.
Junior Evaluators:	William J. Pacino, M.B.A. Cheryl C. McGillivray, A.B.
Research Associates:	Michael P. Krupa, Ed.M. Davelyn Gillar, B.S.
Editorial:	Mary Jacobsen, M.A.
Secretarial:	Kristin DeVries